

## Refugees preparing for their second winter away from home

Sahir is a member of the Dawar tribe and used to live in the Miran Shah area of North Waziristan Agency (Pakistan). Following the aerial bombardment campaign that began in June 2014, he together with his family and others fled to Khost province, Afghanistan. They had first settled in Gurboz district "because the area was close to the border, but there was no shelter or water in the area." His family and 21 other refugee families ended up settling with the host community in Mandozai district, in B village, where they knew that they would be welcome as they had once hosted families from this village who had been forced to flee Afghanistan when the Soviet war was at its height. The elders made it clear that they were happy to reciprocate, providing land on which the refugees could build their transitional shelters.



Figure 1: Shelter materials

One year later, focus group discussions, meetings with refugee elders and representatives, as well as reports from partners in the field indicate that the main concern of the refugees is the need for shelter, particularly as they are preparing to spend another winter in Khost. They already begun constructing mud bricks and temporary shelter but had requested support for roofing. UNHCR is in the process of providing vouchers for roofing materials to help refugee families finish, construct and winterize transitional shelters. So far, 1,817 vouchers have been distributed in Mandozai, Nader Shah Kot, Shamal, and Tani districts. UNHCR

plans to distribute a total of 8,200 vouchers over the next month.

The materials include: three 50kg bags of cement, mud brick frames, 1 roll of plastic sheeting (2m width), precast bricks for roofing 30x30cm, T-light beams (3m) and IPE Steel beams (4m). These families had received vouchers two weeks ago for cement, frames to make mud bricks, plastic sheeting, precast bricks, IPE beams and T irons for the roofing structure. Ten families had joined together and had built ten rooms in a compound for their families. Sahir explained, "As you know, some refugees are living under tents and that's not good for a long time, especially with winter coming."



Figure 2: Refugees constructing shelters in Village B Mandozai



*Figure 3: Sahir in front of a transitional shelter under construction*

Another refugee living in the village, Rahimi, who rents a house in the community for 3,000 Pakistani Rupees per month (approximately USD 30), explained that it would free up his budget and help him provide other items for his family. "When I construct my own house, I won't need to pay monthly and will buy something else for my family, like food." A third refugee explained that he shared the materials with his brother and built one room each for their families, and that they expect to stay in the shelter until they return to Pakistan.

UNHCR will continue to work with partners and other agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance, coordinate the response and foster the self-sufficiency of the refugees to enable them to live with dignity, respect and hope.

*By Marguerite Nowak, UNHCR Afghanistan, November 2015*